



# The HHSA Connection

MARCH 2004

SAFE, HEALTHY AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

## Cleaning Up The Meth Agency Participates in Bi-National Effort to Reduce Regional Drug Problem

**O**n Feb. 1, the Agency helped kick off a joint effort between the U.S. and Mexico to eliminate the regional production and use of methamphetamine, or meth, by going after dealers and users, and promoting education about the drug and treatment options.

Meth, the most prevalent illegal drug in the San Diego region, is also known as speed, so officials dubbed a new enforcement program "Operation Speed BUMP." BUMP stands for Bring Us More Prisoners, Bring Us More Patients, and Bring Us More Phone calls.

Speed BUMP developed out of the regional Meth Strike Force (MSF), which is a multi-disciplinary group of 70 member organizations and agencies, including local, state, and federal representatives from public

health, law enforcement, judiciary, education, treatment, prevention, and intervention agencies. The Agency's Alcohol and Drug Services is a key component in the treatment facet of the operation. The unprecedented effort will include local, state and federal law enforcement and health officials in San Diego and Imperial counties, as well as Mexico.

Due to U.S. drug enforcement efforts, many meth labs have moved to Mexico. The DEA, in coordination with MSF, is working with Mexican officials to expand efforts on both sides of the border.

Supervisor **Dianne Jacob**, a vocal advocate for the regional crackdown on meth and a strong supporter of the development of MSF, spoke at the kick-off. She outlined the basic message of *Operation Speed BUMP*: **"If you have a problem with meth, sooner or later, we're coming to get you. So get yourself into treatment before you have to go to prison."**

CLASSY CLASSIFICATIONS: NORTH INLAND REGION

## The SIDS Expert

### Promoting Community Awareness

**I**ncreasing community awareness of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is one of **Diane Hall's** top priorities.

Hall, public health nurse manager in the North Inland region, serves as the Agency's SIDS coordinator. She is notified anytime an infant dies suddenly with no other explanation for the death. She also sends public health nurses to support grieving parents.

Thankfully, SIDS numbers are going down, she says - the latest figures show that it has declined 64 percent between 1991 and 1998.

Hall promotes the American Academy of Pediatrics' "Back to Sleep" campaign in the community. One of her own campaigns involved making tiny T-shirts for babies that read "Put Me On My Back to Sleep." She is president of the Southern California SIDS Advisory Council.

Hall also enjoys collecting rocks for silversmithing projects, and often wears her own home-crafted jewelry.



Hall (sporting a necklace she made) helps families deal with death.

## A Message from Jean Shepard, Agency Acting Director

**L**ike every year, this March brings a number of retirements. While we express our gratitude for years of dedicated service, and wish our soon-to-be former co-workers well, we also feel the temporary discomfort of change, along with the energy of opportunity.

These days, budget considerations guide our evolution more than usual. For instance, this month Betty Morell (after 33 years of service!), is retiring from her position of South Region General Manager (GM). Rather than simply filling her position with a new employee, current GMs **Rene Santiago** and **Nick Macchione** will each take on additional responsibilities to ensure that all programs run smoothly despite the loss. This is one example of continued commitment to excellent services, with fiscal prudence in mind. By working together, we can make the best of a challenging situation.



*Jean Shepard*

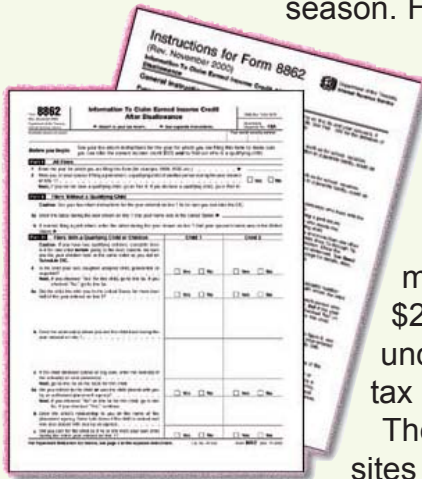


## Central/North Central Region

### Finding the Bright Side of Taxes

#### *Free Services Help Folks Get Earned Income Tax Credit*

**O**n January 31st, the Central Region kicked off the tax season with a bang! Supervisor **Greg Cox** and Central Region Deputy Director **Rene Santiago** were on hand at the Bronze Triangle opening the doors for income tax season. Here, and at other locations throughout the County, residents can get free assistance in preparing their taxes.



The IRS estimates that more than \$25 million dollars went unclaimed in the 2001 tax year.

These tax preparation sites are focused on helping the low income families claim these monies. Many believe that if they don't owe any taxes, they don't need to fill out the forms, and as a result millions go unclaimed.

The maximum refund this year is \$4,294 for a family with two or more qualifying children. The income limit to qualify for the EITC is \$34,692 for a married couple with a least one child.

In a continued effort to support working families, the County Board of Supervisors voted to expand the program to all six Regions. With more than \$300,000 in grants, the County provided funding to

community-based agencies to establish volunteer income tax assistance for working families. Last year, pilot sites completed more than 800 returns (570 from the Central Region). This year the goal is to complete 2,000 returns and have \$3 million in federal refunds.

In addition to the Bronze Triangle, the three other tax assistance sites in the Central Region include the Diamond Neighborhoods, Jackie Robinson YMCA and the Home Start City Heights Tech Center. For locations in the other five regions, call the County-funded hotline at (877) 816-3482.

### Taking Healthy Action

#### *Employee Wellness Initiative Launched*

**N**orth Central Region (NCR) has launched its 2003/04 Employee Wellness Initiative as part of the County's Work Safe/Stay Healthy goal. The objective of the Employee Wellness Initiative is to provide NCR employees with information about the benefits of choosing a healthier lifestyle through a variety of activities, resources and services.

A brief survey was sent to all NCR staff to gather information about their needs and how they feel about their general health. Results from the survey will help determine activities and events that promote healthy lifestyles and a safe work environment. All activities will be designed for maximum staff involvement and activity and tailored to meet the areas of interest identified by the survey.

Future events may include a fitness competition, health fairs, and specific presentations on health related issues.

### Tid Bytes - Information Technology Division

*Did you know...* A password is restricted information and is not to be shared with anyone under any circumstance. For more info, click below:

[http://hhsa\\_intranet.co.san-diego.ca.us/itd/docs/pwpolicy.pdf](http://hhsa_intranet.co.san-diego.ca.us/itd/docs/pwpolicy.pdf)

<http://cww.co.san-diego.ca.us/cit/transition/pdf/pwordtips.doc>

### Training & Development - Group Human Resources

Look for new and ongoing required and career development classes in the Quarterly Calendar, distributed by group e-mail, or check out:

<http://www2.sdcounty.ca.gov/hhsa/ServiceDetails.asp?ServiceID=719>

[http://hhsa\\_intranet/tdc/calendar.asp](http://hhsa_intranet/tdc/calendar.asp) (access restricted to County employees)



## North Coastal/Inland Regions

### Cutting to the Chase

#### *Regional Budget Forum Attracts North County Leaders*

**M**ore than 70 North County Executive Directors, CEOs, elected officials and other leaders gathered on Thursday, February 26 for the North County Budget Impact Forum. Co-



HHSA Deputy Director Nick Macchione presents information on budget impacts.

hosted by the HHSA North Coastal/North Inland Regions and Palomar Pomerado Health, the event provided information on potential budget impacts as well as

a venue for community partners to discuss other cuts North County health and human service programs are experiencing, now and in the coming months.

"Our goal with this forum was to engage our community partners in an honest discussion of what cuts we are all facing, and what this means to children,

families and seniors in North County," said **Nick Macchione**, HHSA Deputy Director. "We must continue the dialogue, in good times and bad, and the success of this event is evidence of the

commitment and trust of our regional leaders."

After hearing presentations by Macchione and **Terry Hogan**, HHSA Finance Director, on the impacts of the State budget cuts on County programs, attendees participated in one of six breakout discussions facilitated by members of the HHSA Executive Team. Palomar Pomerado Health provided a catered lunch.

A summary document from the forum is being developed in collaboration with Palomar Pomerado Health and will be distributed to attendees, other community partners, the Agency Executive Team and others in early March. For more information, please contact Carey Riccitelli at (760) 740-4130.



Breakout sessions provide an opportunity for detailed discussion.

## South Region

### Working Hard to Stay Healthy

#### *Committee Formed to Promote Wellness*

**M**ore than 80% of South Region staff want healthier choices offered in their office vending machines. Two-thirds of all employees do not exercise at least 30 minutes daily, although the same percentage would consider taking a fitness class at work if it were offered during lunch or at the end of the day. These are some results of a survey conducted recently by the South Region's Illness and Injury Prevention Committee. The information will be used by the committee to more effectively promote worksite wellness.

The South Region Illness and Injury Prevention Committee, comprised of staff from all South Region programs, was formed a year ago to brainstorm ways to prevent staff injury and thereby reduce the region's high workers' compensation claim rate. The group analyzed injury reports and quickly acted to implement several relatively simple measures to prevent injuries, such as laying down

South Region reluctantly says good-bye to Betty Morell, RGM, whose exemplary leadership and dedication will be missed by all.

extra mats at entrances on rainy days to prevent falls on slippery wet floors.

The committee has now broadened their mission to encompass general employee health promotion. A free lunch-hour nutrition class was offered to educate employees on how to eat better, and a walking club was started to encourage staff to take their breaks and increase physical fitness.

The information collected in the new survey

suggests that there is still much that can be done to help South Region employees "**work safe, and stay healthy.**"





## Firestorm Review

### *Team expertise serves a variety of needs*

Last fall, the devastating fires that affected so many in San Diego were a real test of courage and generosity. And, they tested how well we are prepared to handle a large-scale disaster. From the onset of the fires and continuing up to today, one major consideration is the mental health of San Diego County residents. All of us have been affected to some degree, and this calls for a wide range of services.

Prior to the firestorms, San Diego County Mental Health Services (MHS) had trained 300 clinicians and community partners in Critical Incident Stress Management response. This earlier effort enabled the County to deploy trained staff into the field readily and confidently, to provide immediate mental health disaster response services to evacuees, survivors and first responders.

Seven Red Cross shelters were established within 24 hours of the onset of the fires. MHS was asked to support the shelters and later the Local Assistance Centers (LACs) seven days a week with a minimum of two mental health clinicians per day, through the middle of December. Within the first week following the firestorms, 158 mental health staff had already been deployed to provide crisis counseling support services, information and linkage. Crisis intervention has also been available through the 24-hour Access and Crisis Line.

San Diego was one of three counties included in a State mental health grant funded by FEMA to provide immediate crisis counseling and intervention services from October 26, 2003 through February 24, 2004.

To meet the increased demand, two contractors were hired to provide short-term, intensive outreach services to the impacted communities, with the County providing grant coordination and liaison with the State. New Alternatives provides crisis counseling and educational outreach in the North Inland/Central Regions of the County, and Community Research Foundation serves the East Region and Ramona. Services are available to people who resided in the Presidential Declared Disaster area, even if they have relocated elsewhere in the County.

Some of the important services the two

contractors continue to provide to the community:

- Coordination with other disaster response organizations
- Participating in local community meetings to identify community needs
- Providing education about mental health disaster response and stress management
- Identifying those who may need crisis counseling and/or support groups, or more intensive mental health services, and connecting them with ongoing services
- Working with special populations such as youth and older adults

Services are provided through the FEMA grant at no charge to the public.

Initial requests were for immediate basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Now, increased numbers of requests are coming in for crisis counseling and support groups. MHS has applied for an additional nine-month grant to meet these requests through November 2004 and is optimistic it will be approved.



Lauren Beauchamp, Special Ed. Services Assessor for the AB2726 program in Central, serving at the Alpine LAC.

### **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT WINTER SHELTER FOR SINGLE ADULTS**

Telecare (REACH) and Episcopal Community Services (Friend to Friend) have joined North Central and Southeast Regional Mental Health Clinics to provide triage, information and referral for single adults at the Newton Tent shelter from 5-7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Mental health services have been provided since December and will continue through March 20th, at 16th and Newton in San Diego. For shelter information, click here [www.sannet.gov/press/031211.shtml](http://www.sannet.gov/press/031211.shtml)



### When Disaster Strikes

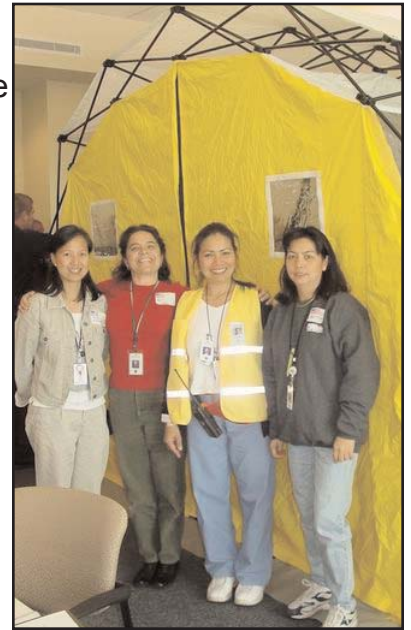
#### *A new fleet of specialty nurses are ready to help*

**T**he new Bioterrorism (BT) Public Health Nurses (PHNs) are an example of enhancements made to public health capacities since September 11th, 2001. Funded by federal BT dollars, each HHSA Region in San Diego County has one full-time BT PHN. What exactly do they do?

For starters, the BT PHNs conduct communicable disease case investigations for the Community Epidemiology Division, giving them the experience needed to respond to large outbreaks of disease or BT events. Additionally, by visiting patients and families in their homes, PHNs use their unique assessment skills to identify other public health issues and make appropriate referrals.

They recently played key roles in the smallpox vaccination program and the Operation Safeguard Mass Vaccination exercise. With their leadership, 130 smallpox responders have been vaccinated in the County and 116 staff received instruction on mass prophylaxis clinic operations. They were also instrumental in coordinating the basic Workforce Readiness and Preparedness training to more than 5,000 HHSA employees, or 93.3%, exceeding our Quality First goal of training at least 75% in the first quarter.

Firestorm 2003 tested the preparedness activities of the BT PHNs. Their involvement in updating regional communication plans allowed the Agency to provide 1,020 nursing hours to 13 Red Cross shelters during that fateful week. They also served as liaisons to health care and disaster preparedness partners. They're a busy group!



Mimi Llamado, Central BT PHN, pictured second from left with other HHSA employees at Operation Safeguard San Diego.

## Aging & Independence Services

### Seniors Reach for the Summit

#### *Upcoming event slated to enlighten and inspire*

**A**ging & Independence Services has been focusing on creating a new image of aging and on helping individuals see a productive, meaningful life when they look at their present and future.

As a part of this goal, AIS is sponsoring the 2004 Aging Summit to be held April 19 at the San Diego Concourse in downtown San Diego. The featured speaker will be Harvard psychiatrist George Vaillant, author of the book "Aging Well." Other speakers include communications specialist Marvin Waldman,

who will talk on "Marketing a Positive Image of Aging," and Phyllis Moen from Cornell University who will talk on "Work as a Component of Retirement."



*Aging Summit featured speaker George E. Vaillant, M.D., is Director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, and a researcher, psychiatrist at Brigham and*

*Women's Hospital, and professor at the Harvard Medical School.*

The Aging Summit is open to the public, and will include lunch. The cost is \$20, or \$10 for seniors age 60+, students and persons with disabilities. To register, call (800) 827-4277.

### Helping Each Other *Seniors and kids definitely have something to share*

**A**IS has also helped kick off an intergenerational component to the First 5 program. Some 11 agencies in the county are being funded by the First 5 Commission to bring older adults and children ages five and under together for the mutual benefit of both. AIS is assisting with the recruitment and training of the senior mentors, who will receive a stipend.

**If you know of any adult age 55 and older who might be interested in working with children ages 5 and younger, and/or their families, have him/her call AIS at (800) 510-2020.**



## Support Divisions - Compliance Office

### Who Ya Gonna Call?

#### *HHSA Compliance Office is ready to hear from you*

**A**s part of ongoing efforts to ensure that Agency clients receive services in accordance with applicable federal and State laws and guidelines, HHSA has established an anonymous Compliance Hotline. This hotline provides a way for employees to direct any questions or concerns they might have about billing, confidentiality, or conduct issues without fear of retaliation. Employees can also call the Compliance Office directly (anonymously if they wish) at (619) 515-4244 or report their concerns directly to their supervisor or manager. All employees will soon receive a letter and other materials regarding the new hotline.

All employees are encouraged to review HHSA's Compliance Policies and Procedures. The policies can be found in Section M of the HHSA Manual of Policies and Procedures on the County Intranet at:

[http://hhsa\\_intranet.co.san-diego.ca.us/policy/index.html](http://hhsa_intranet.co.san-diego.ca.us/policy/index.html)

HHSA recognizes that its greatest strength lies in the talent and skills of employees who perform their jobs competently and professionally and who daily live up to the Agency's Compliance motto:

***"An ethical workplace is your right...and your responsibility."***



## Child Welfare Services

### No Empty Nest

#### *Graduating foster teens keep on learning - and working - at home*

**S**an Pasqual Academy, which is the County's residential educational campus for foster teens, has a successful Transitional Living Program on campus. Two homes on the campus have been designated for this program, with more homes becoming available by June 2004.

Currently, there are nine graduates of the Academy who are living in the homes. Program participants must attend college and/or work. They also participate in chores, food preparation and community

building activities which helps them contribute positively to their living environment. A case manager is on-site to help the graduates fill out college, scholarship and job applications, help them develop their Transitional Independent Living Plan and support them as they make their way into adulthood.

With 32 students slated to graduate high school in June 2004, the Transitional Living Program will continue to grow and develop, not only in the population, but also in the enthusiasm and optimism that the graduates bring with them!





## Support Divisions - Information Technology

### Let's Get this Data Sorted

#### *New computer system will revolutionize information gathering and usability*

If your relationship with technology is love/hate, get ready to be happy. A new, multi-million dollar, 18-county effort is underway to provide a vastly improved information system that will especially help those in all facets of Public Assistance.

The CalWORKS Information System, or CalWIN, is designed to replace the aging main-frame-based Case Data System (CDS). For San Diego County, the project is being managed by the Information Technology Division using tireless and talented resources from throughout the Agency, specifically from Policy and Program Support Division and from the Public Assistance Staff. The CalWIN system looks to revolutionize the business of collecting assistance data, performing eligibility calculations, facilitating State reporting and to trim error rates.

The CalWIN system includes many features that HHS's (Formerly eligibility technicians) have been

requesting for years. Features that will streamline communications between workers, store scheduling information, eliminate the need for large batch printing (CalWIN keeps forms online), provide quick links to reference materials, extensive online help capabilities, real time updates...and the list goes on.

Getting to implementation day (sometime within the next few years) still requires a huge effort of planning, coordinating and managing, and here is where the real challenge lies. Since this system will cross many business unit boundaries, a true coalition of staff and resources coupled with a common goal has been assembled.

Although needs differ, the Agency's requirement is the same: supply exceptional service to the public while maintaining an efficient and function-rich environment.

The CalWIN project truly is about working together, be it 18 counties, or 18 sets of departmental users. And, the new system will hopefully raise the bar regarding how we leverage and apply technological solutions to our ever-growing business needs, thus ensuring our ability to serve and lead.

## HHSA Overview - Aging & Independence Services - *hyperlinked!*

Each month, the *HHSA Connection* will feature the services of the Agency's different divisions, to provide a broad overview of the Agency. This month, the series kicks off with AIS - you just might be surprised at all they do.

The County of San Diego's Aging & Independence Services (AIS) serves older adults, disabled persons, those at risk of abuse, and others who would be at risk of institutionalization. AIS is the only single public or private organization for seniors in the county that combines so many services under one jurisdiction, and sets the standard for integration of services throughout the country. Most of these services are accessed through the AIS Call Center, (800) 510-2020 or (800) 339-4661 for persons calling from outside San Diego County.

#### **Home-Based Services**

AIS assists elderly and disabled clients to remain independent in their homes as long as safely possible by linking them with appropriate services:

**In-Home Supportive Services** (IHSS) provides personal care and domestic services for income- and need-eligible aged, blind and disabled persons.

**Multipurpose Senior Services Program** (MSSP) provides case management services for seniors age 65 and older who are eligible for Medi-Cal and are at risk for institutionalization.

**Management and Assessment of Social and Health Needs** (MASH) serves frail and disabled adults age 60 and older, who are at risk of nursing home placement and ineligible for other care management programs.

**HomeAssist** helps frail seniors 60 and older maintain independence through homemaker, respite, escort and money-management services. Enrollment is limited; priority is given to low-income seniors.

**Linkages** serves adults 18 and older who are at risk of institutionalization and are ineligible for other care management programs.

**Family Caregiver Support Program** services include support groups, respite, counseling and help with resources.

*Continued on page 8*



## Protection and Advocacy Services

AIS ensures the right to safety and dignity with the following services:

**Adult Protective Services (APS)** serves adults 65 and older, and those 18 and older with disabilities, who are harmed or threatened with harm. APS investigates cases of neglect, abandonment, and physical, financial or sexual abuse. After a report of suspected abuse comes to the Call Center (800) 510-2020, an assessment is made, with recommendations on how the situation can be improved. Referrals to other programs often follow, along with emergency provisions for food, shelter, or in-home aid. Abuse calls can be made 24 hours a day. Reports are confidential.

**Senior Mental Health Team** does in-home assessments and initiates help for persons age 55 and older with mental disorders. Help includes crisis intervention, psychiatric evaluation, counseling and case management.

**Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program** provides advocates for residents in long-term care facilities. These advocates maintain a presence in the facilities; respond to, and resolve, complaints; act as mediators; support residents' rights; and witness certain legal documents. Visits by ombudsmen are unannounced, and discussions with residents are confidential. Phone: (800) 640-4661 or (858) 560-2507.

**Public Administrator/Public Guardian** acts as conservator of estates for those in danger of losing assets. The office also handles estates of deceased persons and arranges for the final disposition of those deceased without assets. Phone: (858) 694-3500.

**Edgemoor** has long-term, skilled nursing care for patients not easily cared for in private-sector facilities. Edgemoor also includes rehabilitation therapies and a psychiatric unit.

**Project CARE** is a community network program that enables home-bound adults to live independently in their own homes. Services include "Are You OK?" phone checks, Vial of Life to store medical information, minor home repair program, and a Safe Return program for the memory-impaired.

**Veterans Services Office** assists veterans and their dependents and survivors in obtaining benefits from the federal, state and local agencies administering programs for veterans.

**Health Independence Services** Since enjoyment of life is predicated on good health, it is not surprising that a number of AIS services are health-focused:

**Health Promotions Program** informs and motivates seniors to take responsibility for their own good health through a lifestyle of proper nutrition and adequate exercise. A network of senior organizations, health care organizations, hospitals, pharmacists, dietitians and nurses participate in this program.

**Feeling Fit Clubs**, a program of the Health Promotions Team, offer specialized exercise classes that meet regularly at sites throughout the county. The focus is to help older adults improve their balance, strength and flexibility in a fun setting.

**Senior Dining Centers** provide people 60 years and older with at least one hot, nutritious meal each weekday, served in a social setting. The meals provide peer contact, access to information, plus activities at the dining sites.

**Home-Delivered Meals** serve adults 60 and older who are home-bound. A hot meal is delivered each weekday and frozen meals are provided for the weekends.

**MO Meals** supplements private-sector meal services to the home-bound elderly. MO Meals provides hot, nutritious daily breakfasts to the most-frail elders, plus festive

Thanksgiving dinners delivered by volunteers.

## Education and Enrichment Services

AIS encourages seniors and persons with disabilities to broaden their awareness of the community and participate:

**RSVP** (Retired & Senior Volunteer Program) urges adults 55 and older to volunteer at nonprofit and public agencies. RSVP volunteers serve schools, hospitals, day care centers, libraries, senior centers, police stations, animal shelters and hundreds of other community organizations.

**Intergenerational Program** promotes projects throughout the county that bring young people and older adults together for mutual benefit.

**Outreach & Education Team** provides mandated training about elder and dependent adult abuse. Team members are also building regional action networks to identify needs for seniors and adults with special needs, plus promote Project CARE.



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Health and Human Services Agency

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